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FILE ONLY

Jackson Weighs Middle East Trip To Seek Release of Abducted Men

By JESUS RANGEL

The Rev. Jesse Jackson said yesterday that he was considering making another trip to the Middle East, this time to seek the release of three Americans kidnapped by gunmen on the sidewalks of Beirut.

Mr. Jackson said he did not know who was holding the hostages or where they were.

"But we have reason to believe that they are alive," he said. "I'm willing to go there if there's any likelihood that we can gain their release."

Mr. Jackson flew to Rome from New York last night as part of a nine-day trip to Europe, which will also include a visit to London. He plans to meet with Pope John Paul II in Rome and with activists involved in the nuclear freeze and anti-apartheid movements in London.

While in Europe, Mr. Jackson said, he will talk with people from the Middle East to assess the possibility of talks to gain the release of the Americans.

He would not elaborate on who the Middle East contacts were or whether they included government officials or informal intermediaries with governments in the Middle East.

Mr. Jackson made his remarks at a

news conference at St. Charles Borromeo Church on 141st Street in Harlem after church ceremonies there. Attending the services and the news conference with Mr. Jackson was Lucille Levin, wife of Jeremy Levin, the 51-year-old bureau chief for the Cable News Network who disappeared in March 7 as he walked from his apartment in Beirut to his office.

The two other kidnapped Americans are William Buckley, the political officer of the United States Embassy, who was abducted March 7 in similar fashion, and the Rev. Benjamin M. Weir, a Presbyterian minister kidnapped while walking with his wife on March 8.

Also present at the news conference was Marilyn Goodman, mother of Lieut. Robert Goodman of the Navy, who was released from captivity in Syria after Mr. Jackson, then a Democratic Presidential candidate, went there in January 1984.

The State Department believes that the kidnappings were the work of a faction of the Party of God, a militant pro-Iranian Shiite group operating in Lebanon. The group is also believed to be responsible for the bombing attacks at the United States Embassy and the Marine barracks in Lebanon.